

A N
E S S A Y
O N T H E
Rights and Duties
O F
PATRONS of CHURCHES.

By NATHANIEL COLLIER. M. A.

*Malè se res habet, cum quod virtute effici debet id
tentatur pecuniâ.* Cic. de Offic.



L O N D O N:

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THE ASSOCIATED

Rights and Duties

OF THE

AMERICAN COLLEGE

OF THE



OF THE



TO THE

Most Reverend Father in God,

WILLIAM

Lord Arch-Bishop of Canterbury.

May it please your GRACE,



HE filling the Church with
Good and Able Ministers, is
a Thing of such mighty
consequence to the Advance-
ment of Religion, and the general
Benefit of the Church; that an At-

tempt to make them who have it in a great measure in their Power, sensible of their Obligation, to Do this; cannot but meet with Approbation from your Grace, proportionable to your known Zeal to promote those Ends. And therefore I cannot doubt of your Grace's Pardon, for offering to send the following Discourse out into the World, under the countenance of your Great Name; hoping That may in some Degree take off the Neglect it is like to meet with, from the Obscurity of its Author.

I HAVE consider'd the Duty of Patronage no further than it is vested in Lay-hands; being sensible how little reason there is to complain of the Abuse of it in the Church, and how insufferable an Insolence it would be in a private Presbyter, to take upon him to Censure or to Teach the Bishops: And the Arguments which I have used, are only such as suppose Men to have a Sense

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a Sense of Religion, and of the Obligations of Conscience. For tho' I never expect to see the World so wise, as to have Persons and Things universally esteemed according to their Real Worth; yet as these are the strongest, so are they the most likely Motives to produce so desirable an end.

IT cannot indeed be expected that those Patrons of whom Religion and Conscience have no hold, should be prevailed with by any thing that I can urge, to forego those Advantages of their Privilege, which the common Law allows them: But it is to be hoped that the Clergy themselves, will have so just a Sense of their Obligations, as not to concur with them in any Methods which may bring a Dishonour upon their Sacred Function, or enslave themselves. I have to the utmost of my Power consulted Their Interest, and the common Good of the Church; which are so steadily pursued by

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by your Grace, that I cannot doubt
but they will be sufficient to recommend
this my weak Endeavour to your Ac-
ceptance.

I am with the greatest Respect,

My LORD,

YOUR GRACE'S most Dutifull

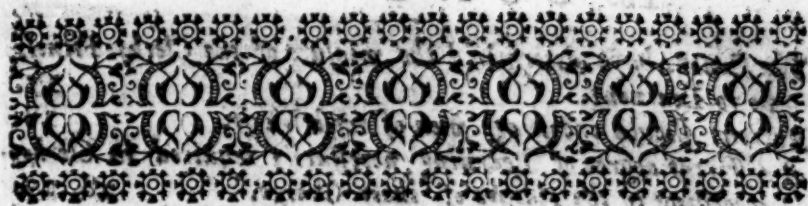
and Humble Servant,

Harfield near Uxbridge,

Feb. 22. 1719.

NATH. COLLIER.





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AN
ESSAY, &c.



Y a PATRON I understand, the person, whosoever he be that has a *Right* of presenting a Clerk to any Ecclesiastical Benefice or Preferment, particularly to Parochial Churches upon a Vacancy; *Jus presentandi Clericum ad Ecclesiam Vacantem, ex gratiâ ei concessum qui consentiente Episcopo vel construxit vel dotavit Ecclesiam*, saith Corasius: So that this Right is as ancient, as the Foundation and Endowment of Churches, on which it is originally grounded; when for the Encouragement of Lay-persons to works of so much Piety, it was permitted them to present their Clerks, where themselves or their Ancestors had expressed their Bounty in that kind.

AND this was matter of special favour: For it is well known, that in the first Settlement of this Church of *England*, the Bishops

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shops of the several Dioceses had them under their own immediate care, and had the Nomination of Fit persons to officiate within the Limits of their Jurisdiction; and having the Clergy living in a Community with them, they sent them abroad to several parts of their Dioceses, as they saw occasion to employ them; But that by Degrees finding a Necessity of fixing Presbyters within such a Compass, to attend upon the Service of God among the people that were the Inhabitants; in order to procure a settled Maintenance for such Presbyters, and to encourage the Lords and Owners of Manors to build and endow Churches, for the more convenient and solemn Administration of Divine Offices; They consented to admit such Lords, and their Heirs and Successors for ever, to a share in the Disposal of the Churches built and endow'd by them; and to let them have the Nomination of persons to serve them, provided they were satisfied of the FITNESS of those persons, and that it were not deferr'd beyond such a limited time.

THIS is owned by the Civil Law in *Justinian's Novels*, decreed above 1100 years ago, towards the end of the Vth Century; one whereof *Godolphin* thus translates: *If any Man shall erect an Oratory, and his Desire be to present a Clerk thereunto by Himself or his Heirs; if they furnish the Clerk with a Competency, and nominate to the Bishop such as are worthy,*

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worthy, they may be obtained: &c. And the same Right we find claimed by the Nobility of England in their Remonstrance to Gregory IX. when he attempted to incroach upon their Privileges, in the Reign of Henry III. *Cam igitur a primâ Christianitatis Fundatione in Angliâ, tali fuerint hætenus Progenitores nostri gavisî liberate, quod decedentibus Ecclesiarum Rectoribus, Ecclesiarum Patroni Personas Idoneas eligentes ad easdem Diocesanis præsentaverunt, ab eisdem Ecclesiarum Regimini præficiendas.* Which words plainly shew, that the Right of Patronage consisted in the Nomination of Fit Persons to the Bishop of the Diocese, for any vacant Places: And that the Patrons had this Privilege ever since Christianity was founded here, say the Barons; but they mean, ever since Parochial Churches were endowed by their Ancestors; for there could be no such Right of Patronage before, That being originally in the Church, and vested in the Bishops; but afterward conferr'd by their Consent, upon such Lords as built and endow'd Churches upon their Manors, in consideration of their Piety and Bounty. *Et Hoc singulari favore sustinetur, ut allectentur Laici, invitentur & inducantur ad Constructionem Ecclesiarum;* saith the Gloss in *cap. Pia mentis*, quoted in Godolphin's Report: Canon 2 p. 179. And this Right is therefore justly continued to their Posterity, and those who have purchased from them to this day.

B

So

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So that all Advowsons or Rights of Presentation in private Patrons, were at first *appendant* to Manors, and not *in gross*; because the Right came from the Endowment out of the Manor. But since, the Advowson is frequently separated from the Manor; and is in the Nature of other Temporal Inheritances: Insomuch that Whosoever is possessed of this Right, may either devise it by Will, or grant it by Deed, in Fee, or for Life, or for Years; as they may any other Estate; a Privilege among others, which Bishop *Stillingfleet* observes is not allowed Patrons in other Countries, where the Ecclesiastical Law is stricter than here in *England*.

AND it is a very valuable Privilege, altho' it be somewhat restrained by the late Act of Parliament in the Reign of Q. *Anne* *; which declares the Purchase of *the next Avoidance* of any Church-Preferment or Living, so far at least as any Clergyman shall be concern'd therein, to be a *Simoniackal Contract*: For before that Act, our Laws gave even Ecclesiastical Persons the same Liberty with others of buying a single Turn or the next Presentation to a Living, if it were done during the Life and Health of the Incumbent. But as Matters now stand, the Temporal Privilege of Patronage is so great, as in a manner to make it forgotten that it is a Spiritual Trust: Of which I shall speak hereafter; designing to consider

* 12^o. *Anne*, Act for Maintenance of Curates, &c.

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consider the *Rights* of Patrons, so far only as may be useful for the better and clearer Declaration of their *Duty*.

OUR Law-Books abound with particular Cases, as to the Rights of Patronage and Advowsons both *appendant* and *in gross*, which those that are concern'd may there consult. It is enough for my purpose to have pointed out the Original of this Privilege, and the Design of the Church in granting it to the Laity, and the pious Return the Laity made to the Church in Ages less corrupt, by their Bountifull Endowments: Whence we may well enough suppose, that they justly acquired the Name and Title of *Patroni*; as well on account of their liberal Donations to the Church at first, as the obligation they were under to protect and defend her Rights, and those of their Clerks from Oppression and Violence. For which reason they were also called *Advocati*, because (as the Constitution hath it) *tueri & defendere Ecclesiam & ejus Jura tenentur, ad instar Advocati, qui in Judicio causam alicujus defendit*: For so Lyndwood explains it.

AND hence we may see with how great propriety this Canonist calls *Jus Patronatus* or the Right of Patronage, *Jus Honorificum, Utile & Onerosum: Honorificum*, an honourable Privilege, in that Those who are possessed of it, are entrusted with so large a share of Spiritual Authority, as the Nomination of Stewards over the Household of Christ: *Utile* a beneficial

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beneficial Privilege, on account of the temporal Advantages thereunto annex'd, especially since it has been enlarg'd to a Liberty of selling Rights of Advowson, and disposing of them by way of provision for the younger Branches of Families. But it must not be forgotten, that this Beneficial and Honourable Right and Privilege is withal *Onerosum*, very weighty and burdensome; in that the Trust and Care of those Churches, which their Ancestors endow'd is incumbent upon them, and they are bound to look after and defend the Rights of them. Especially if they consider the Obligation they are under to provide for Persons to undertake the Care of the Flock of Christ. Whence a learned Civilian well observes, that *Patronus tenetur protegere Ecclesiam, & reparare si minuetur ruinam, & de bono Sacerdote providere.*

AND this leads me to speak something of the DUTY of Patrons; which cannot be thought an unnecessary or unseasonable undertaking, if it be consider'd how far the present Age is degenerated from the Spirit and Piety of their Forefathers, so as to behold with an evil eye those poor Remains of the Bounty, by which former Ages had testified their Honour for Religion, and Love of the Clergy; and to make merchandise of the Privilege which their Predecessors obtained through the Riches of their Liberality, and which they valued chiefly for the Opportunity it gave them, to express the Forwardness of their
Zeal

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Zeal for the Church's Honour, and to recommend such as were *Worthy* to the Cure.

But these Times are past; and those that succeed the *Saxons* in their Privileges and Possessions, manifestly come behind them in their Zeal. And though we cannot expect to revive the primitive Spirit of our Forefathers; yet it is to be hoped, that the Abuse of Patronage so loudly complained of in this Age, proceeds rather from the Misunderstanding or the not rightly considering the Nature of that Privilege, than from any gross and wilfull Disregard to the Obligations of Religion and Conscience: And therefore that the chief thing wanting to put a stop to such Abuse, is the serious consideration of the *Duty* that goes along with the Privilege.

Now in order to set the Duty of Patrons in a clear Light, it must be consider'd that the Right which they enjoy, (however the common Law may look upon it as a Temporal Inheritance, because the Patron is vested with it by the common Law, or because 'tis annex'd to a Temporal Inheritance, and is of the Nature of other Temporal Tenures) yet is more properly and indeed a *Spiritual Trust*. It is not an Original and Absolute Right to dispose of Benefices as Patrons please, but a limited Trust reposed in them to nominate *Fit Persons* to discharge the Duties of their places. So Bishop *Stillingsfleet* explains it. *Eccles. Cases 2d Edit. p. 309.* For as has been said, the Laity had not any such
Right

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Right from the beginning; the Nomination of Persons to Officiate throughout their Dioceses, being the Original and Inherent Right of the Bishops, but given up by them to the Lords of Manors, upon the valuable consideration of their Building and Endowing Churches; which was done however with Reservation to themselves of an entire Right, to judge of the *Fitness* of the Persons so nominated: And this is the Law of the Church to this Day. And tho' the Power thereby lodged in Bishops be much weak'ned and restrained by subsequent Encroachments, by degrees advanced into the Legal Privileges of Patrons, whereby Their Power is on the other hand as much increas'd; yet are the Bishops still the proper Judges of the *FITNESS* of the Persons, to be employed in the several parts of their Dioceses; and if the Patrons do not present *FIT* Persons within the time limited by Law, the Care of those Churches returns to the Bishops. And this is a plain Proof that the Right of Patronage is a *Trust*; which relating to *spiritual* Persons, and being appointed and design'd for *Spiritual Ends*, however put into Lay-hands, shews the Propriety of calling it a *Spiritual Trust*.

Now every Trust implies an Obligation in point of Conscience, to Faithfulness in the Discharge of it. *It is required in Stewards,* says the Apostle, *that a Man be found Faithfull* *. That which recommends, and which indeed

* 1 Cor. iv. 2.

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indeed is justly expected from persons put in Trust, is a faithfull Execution of it: But they cannot be counted Faithfull, any further than they answer the Ends, for which the Trust was reposed in them. Now by the Original Concession which the Bishops made of Patronage to the Laity it appears, that they entrusted them with this Privilege, upon condition that they provided FIT Persons to serve the Churches to which they should present; and therefore the FITNESS of the Persons is what they ought chiefly to consider, in all their Presentations: And their Obligation to do this is the greater, by reason so much depends on their faithfull Discharge of the Trust committed to them, and because so many different persons have a Right to demand it of them. For it is to be consider'd.

I. In the first place that *Christ* as *Head of his Church* will require, that All who have any Authority therein should use it faithfully, for the general Good of *his Body* and the Edification of his Members. And since the Care and Instruction of his Flock, the leading and guiding them in the way to Eternal Life, and the watching over the Souls whom he hath purchased with his Blood, is the Business which the Patrons Nominees are to undertake; we may be sure he will expect, they should have a strict regard to the Qualifications of the Persons, whom they nominate to so important a Trust; and that they should
set

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set aside all worldly and selfish Considerations, in the Appointment of those who are to serve the Spiritual Necessities of *his Body* and *his Spouse*. Nay and this is what

II. THE Church itself may very reasonably expect from the Patrons of Her Benefices; Inasmuch as the *Fitness* or *Unfitness* of the Persons that are set over the Particular Parts, is sure to turn to the general and common Benefit or Disservice of the whole Society. It is well known how ready the Enemies of Religion always are to lay hold of the Faults of a Few, as a pretence to accuse the whole Order of the Clergy: But if *the Shepherds be smitten, the Sheep must be scatter'd*; if the Pastors lose their Credit, how can the Flock escape unhurt? And tho' the Persons *by whom the Offence cometh* may be chiefly to blame, as the immediate causes of the Reflections cast upon their Brethren, and of the lessening their Authority among the People; yet those who raised them to this Capacity of *Doing Mischief*, thro' the Mismanagement of the Trust reposed in them, cannot but be looked upon as the remote occasions, and therefore must also come in for a considerable share in the Guilt, of the Damage by them done.

THE Publick Good in Temporal Cases, is always to be preferr'd before all Private Considerations; But that Obligation holds much more strongly in cases of a Spiritual Nature: And He that considers the Privilege of Patronage

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tronage with no other view, than as it gives him an Opportunity to promote his own private ends, and without any regard to the Welfare and Prosperity of the Church of Christ, is plainly wanting in that Publick Spirit which recommends a Patriot, as well as in the disinterested Virtue that adorns a Christian. But it is to be consider'd further

III. IN the third place, that the Right of Patronage is a *Trust*, with regard to the Bishop of the Diocese; who may therefore very justly require, that a faithfull regard should be had to the FITNESS of the Persons presented to him for the Care of Souls under his Jurisdiction. It was with a special Proviso for the due Execution of this *Trust*, that the Bishops at first put it into Lay-hands: Neither have Patrons at this day any *rightfull* claim to the Privilege of their Ancestors, in the Nomination of any other than FIT Persons to serve their Churches; the care whereof upon default returns *Jure communi* to the Bishop of the Diocese, and he has a Right to provide for them. So that the *Fitness* of the Persons is the Boundary of the Patron's Privilege; and if he have not a due regard thereunto, but presents those that he knows to be *Unworthy* to be admitted by the Bishop to any vacant Churches (whom the Bishop cannot notwithstanding in many cases reject) he plainly usurps upon the Bishop's Right in Law, if he do not likewise put a Force upon his Conscience.

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'Tis true, the Bishop has by Law the Right of Investiture or Admission of the Person presented by the Patron; and also the Right of Examining and Judging of His Abilities and Sufficiency: But His Abilities must be very mean indeed; it must be a very scandalous Insufficiency, that will at this time of day justify the Bishop for Refusing him. And this makes it the more necessary, for Patrons to act conscientiously in this matter; and the more difficult it is for Bishops to Reject the *Unworthy*, the more highly are Patrons obliged to make choice of None but such as are *Worthy*. The Bishop has the chief care of all the Souls in his Diocese, and therefore is *bound in Conscience* to see them well taken care of; but it is very hard that he should be *bound in Law*, to commit that Care to such Persons as he cannot think *Fit* to undertake it. And since the Right which the Patron enjoys, was originally owing to the Particular Indulgence of the Bishops, I think he is concern'd in *Honour* so far to join with the Diocesan in providing *Fit* Persons for his Approbation, as to lighten the Burden the Church has laid upon him: That he may not be forced to *admit*, and to *confirm* those in the Care of Souls under him which he cannot *approve*; contrary not only to his own Impartial Judgment concerning their *Fitness* to take upon them such a Trust, but to the Original Intention of his Predecessors, in granting away from his See the Right of nominating Clerks to serve the Churches belonging to it.

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I DARE say, if the Founders of Churches had ever dream'd, that the Privilege of Patronage would ever be carried to such an Height of Abuse, they would never have desired it should have been transmitted to their Successors; but as they obtained it by their Piety and Munificence, would as piously and freely have restored it to the Church from whence they received it. Thus much may be fairly presumed from their Good will to the Church, expressed in the Bounty of their Endowments: And tho' probably there are None of those that are at present possessed of the Patronage of Ecclesiastical Benefices, that are lineally descended from the First Patrons of them; yet it seems but reasonable to expect, that those that inherit their Privileges and Estates should also inherit their Virtues, and express the same Piety and Care in the Disposal of their Churches, as their Predecessors did in the Foundation; with such a due regard to the Bishop's Right of Approbation of the Persons presented to him, as to obtain his Consent in Conscience as well as in Law. But it is not sufficient for Patrons to consider themselves as Persons put in *Trust*, upon the foregoing accounts; For there is a Duty results from their Privilege,

IV. WITH regard to the People and the Flock, over whom the Clerk which he presents is to be set: For it is the Care of their Souls, which he by his Office is to undertake; and therefore They may very well expect, that Patrons should consult their Spiritual Advan-

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tage, and make choice of *FIT* Persons to serve them in those Concerns, which are of all other things of the highest Weight and Importance; and which if they are not sufficiently provided for, must be attended with the most dangerous and dismal Consequences to all Eternity. Now tho' there be many other Helps and Assistances, which the good Providence of God affords every people for their Souls health, so as to leave them inexcusable for neglecting the *One thing Needfull*: Yet there depends so much upon the Care and Service of such as *are set over 'em* in the Lord, that the Patron who is unconcern'd, whom he nominates to undertake it, and has no regard to the *Fitness* of the Clerks whom he prefers to such a Trust, cannot certainly but come in for a considerable share in the Guilt of the Miscarriage of such Souls, as may perish thro' the bad Choice that he makes: Because having it in his Power as a Superior, to have made better Provision for them, he dealt unfaithfully in the Trust reposed in him.

It was the Nearness of the Relation between the Pastor and his Flock, and the Care and Authority which he had over them, which made it thought reasonable in the primitive times to allow of Popular Elections. And tho' the scandalous Abuse of that Privilege made it necessary for the Bishops by degrees to restrain it, and at last to take the Nomination of Clerks throughout their Dioceses again into their own Hands; as they had been all
along

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along Judges of the *Regularity* of the Election, and of the *Fitness* of the Persons chosen: Yet in whose soever hands the Right of Nomination rests, it seems but reasonable that a conscientious care should be taken, to provide for each Congregation *Fit* Persons to serve them in the Affairs of their Souls, and to supply all their Spiritual Wants. And since this *Trust* is now devolved in so many Churches into Layhands, such Patrons ought certainly to consider it, not barely as a Private Privilege or Advantage, but as a matter of Publick Concern, for which they must give an account unto God: And therefore that there is an Obligation in point of Conscience going along with it, to seek out Good and Worthy men, *IDONEAS PERSONAS*, such as are *Fit*, well qualified and duely prepared, according to the Nature of the Charge they are to undertake. So that the *Fitness* of the Persons is the principal Consideration, which ought to influence Patrons in the Disposal of their Benefices.

Now the *Fitness* of any Clerk presented to a Benefice, which the Bishop of the Diocese is to examine and judge of, and which therefore the Patron ought impartially to consider, relates either to *his Life* or to *his Learning* and Abilities; whether he be, as *Lyndwood* saith, *commendandus Scientiâ & Moribus*; or as the Capitulars of *France* *probabilis vite & Doctrina*: And therefore the 39th Canon forbids the Bishop to give Institution, unless the Clerk bring a *sufficient Testimony* of his former good Life and Behaviour,

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viour, and also, *appear upon Examination to be Worthy of the Ministry*. Now that which with relation to the Bishop is a sufficient cause to Refuse Institution, ought certainly to be looked upon by the Patron as a good Exception, and indeed a Necessary Bar against giving a Presentation. Wherefore

I. A Patron, if he have a due regard to the FITNESS of the Person whom he presents to any Ecclesiastical Benefice, ought to be well satisfied of his *Good Life* and Conversation; that he is *commendandus Moribus*, and that no reasonable Exception can be taken at his Morals. Now as to this matter the Bishop commonly speaking has no other way of judging, but by the Testimonials of Others; and if these at any time should be given to the Undeserving, through Excess of Civility or Good Nature falsely so called, the Bishop presuming them to be justly obtained, has it not in his Power to Refuse the Person thus recommended. But Patrons are supposed to have a Personal Knowledge of their Clerks, or at least to have received such just Information concerning them, as makes it scarce credible they should be grossly deceived; it being very rare for any Clerk to obtain the Favour of a Presentation from those who are utter Strangers to his character: And therefore they cannot escape the Guilt of the highest Unfaithfulness, if they present Immoral and Disorderly Persons to their Benefices. For this is letting a Wolf into the Sheep-fold, and exposing the
Flock

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Flock of Christ to all the Mischief and Danger, that can befall them under such as will be so far from *feeding them with food convenient for them*; that they will be ready to lead them into unwholsome Pastures, or leave them to shift for themselves, when they are beset with Ravenous Beasts of Prey.

ST. Paul argues very justly †, *If a Man know not how to rule his own House, how shall he take care of the Church of God?* And how much more unfit is He to undertake that care, who knows not how to rule or govern himself? For He that leads a scandalous and debauch'd Life, will have but little power to form the Manners of his Charge to Piety and Virtue; but let him inveigh never so earnestly in his publick Sermons and Discourses against Vice and Profaness, so long as He himself in Practice contradicts his own Precepts and Instructions, he must do more mischief by his bad Example than his Preaching can repair; and make the people more dissolute and debauched than otherwise they would be. So that in this case we may say, with a small alteration of the Apostle's Argument, that he is utterly *Unfit to teach another who teacheth not himself, to preach against stealing who is guilty of Theft himself, or to warn Men of the Danger of committing Adultery or any otherwise breaking the Law, who dishonoureth God by breaking it himself.*

FOR

† 1 Tim. iii. 5.

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FOR besides the Mischief hereby done to any particular Flock or Congregation, Religion and the Church of Christ will be sure to suffer, and *the Name of God* to be *blasphemed*, and *the Offering of the Lord* to be *abhorred*; whilst the Faults of such Clerks are charg'd upon the whole Body of the Clergy, and the Reverence and Esteem due from the people to their Pastors is withdrawn, and a pretence taken to forsake them, and to *heap to themselves Teachers* of their own chusing; contrary to that wholesome Order and Discipline, which Christ has established in his Church.

Now tho' those that give the immediate occasion, are very justly chargeable with a great degree of the Guilt of these Mischiefs; yet must the Patrons, as I before observed, who take no care about the Qualifications of their Presentees, be looked upon as the Original Causes from whom they spring. 'Tis true, the Bishop as Ordinary of his Diocese, has a Power to enquire into the Character of the Persons presented to him, as to Morals; and for the Clergy that are already possessed of any Benefice under his Jurisdiction, He is to watch over their Life and Manners, to take cognizance of their Crimes if Guilty, and to punish them by Ecclesiastical Censures: But then the most Malicious must acquit him of all blame in this case, if they consider how rarely the Crimes of the most Dissolute come to his Knowledge, how backward those that can make proof of their Offences are to inform or
appear

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appear against them; and therefore how difficult it is to get such a legal Evidence, as in Justice ought to be brought against those that are to suffer the Lash of the Law.

BESIDES that when a man's faults are proved, they must be of a very high and scandalous Nature to subject Him, if in possession of a Living, immediately to a Deprivation; or to warrant the Refusal of him upon offering a Presentation: And that he is much more easily kept out of a Benefice by the Consciencious Care of a Patron, than he can be Refus'd or Dispossess'd by the Ordinary's Authority: Which, however it may be sufficient both to Refuse and to Deprive, upon legal and clear proof of Crimes that are *Mala in se*, such as Incontinence, Perjury, Simony, &c. Yet, as to *Mala Prohibita*, will be found too weak to contend with a *Quare impedit* at common Law, or a *Duplex Querela* in the Spiritual Court.

HOWEVER if the Bishop had it in his Power to remove the Scandal and Damage that must arise to the Church, from the Immorality of the Clerks presented to her Benefices, either by Refusing or Depriving them; yet does not this at all acquit the Patron of his Obligation, to seek and to present Persons of good Life and Behaviour: For it is much better to prevent any Mischief that threatens the Church, than to apply a precarious Remedy to it afterwards. And I hope it has been proved, that the Patron having more Power than the Bishop, as matters now stand, is under an

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dispensable Obligation to do this ; by Nominating None to any Benefice in his Gift but *FIT* Persons in the first Sense of the Word, that is, those whom he reasonably presumes to be Men of a blameless Life and Conversation. But

II. A Patron must consider the *Fitness* of his Clerk for the Benefice which he presents him to, as it relates to his *Learning* and *Abilities*; whether he be *commendandus Scientiâ* or *probabilis Doctrina*, whether he have Learning and Ability sufficient for the Discharge of his Pastoral Duty. Now the Enquiry concerning this properly belongs to *the Bishop*; who by the forecited Canon is forbid to *institute any to a Benefice, except he shall appear upon due and impartial Examination to be worthy of his Ministry*. Here one would think should be room enough for the Bishop to exert his Authority, sufficient power lodged in his hands to see all the Churches of his Diocese well supplied; since he has a Right both to examine the Persons presented to him Himself, and is also in this Examination a *Judge* of their *Fitness* and *Sufficiency*; especially since this is on all hands allowed to be a part of the common Law of *England* *. And indeed as to those that are grossly ignorant and illiterate, if there be any such to be found amongst the Clergy (which may well be question'd) the Bishop has sufficient power to Reject them, if they should by any means obtain a Presentation. But in this case he cannot act *arbitrarily*, tho' he does *judicially*; and

* Vid. Stillingfl. Eccl. Cases. p. 316.

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and the Canons having set the *Fitness* of Clerks as to Learning in a very low degree of Attainments, have much lessen'd the Bishop's Power in his Examination and Judgment of their Sufficiency. For provided *they be able to yield an account of their Faith in Latin according to the 39 Articles of Religion, and to confirm the same by sufficient Testimonies out of the Holy Scriptures;* (which may be done by men of slender Abilities) it does not appear, that the Bishop can warrant his Refusal of such as are thus qualified, for want of any higher degree of Learning.

THIS indeed is the lowest Form, but it is Learning sufficient for Orders by the thirty-fourth Canon; and therefore I conclude, that it is also sufficient for Admission to a Benefice; and that the Law will look upon him to be *worthy of his Ministry*, in the Sense of the thirty-ninth Canon, whom the 34th declares to be worthy of Orders. And if the Law has determined the Measure of the Clerks Fitness and Sufficiency, as to me it seems to have done, the Bishop can have no Power to refuse any, but such as fall short of the measure thereby required: Or if he does, he must be liable to a vexatious and expensive Suit at Law, to justify his Notion of *Insufficiency*; I mean to a *Duplex Querela* in the Ecclesiastical Courts, and a *Quare impedit* at common Law, as was before observed.

BUT it were to be wished, that None would content themselves with the very lowest de-

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gree of Learning which the Canon requires; and that Patrons would encourage higher attainments, by making them necessary steps to their Favour; and consult the *Honour* and *Prosperity* of the Church as well as her bare *Necessities*; by distributing the Benefices that are in their Gift with so visible a regard to *true Goodness* and *real Merit*, that it may appear that the only way to Advancement is, next unto a *good Life, hard Study and unwearied Labour and Diligence* in their Vocation and search after Knowledge: Which it is the more incumbent upon Patrons to do, by reason of the Greatness of their Privilege, and the Smallness of the Bishop's Power.

'Tis true, the meaner Abilities of those that are Exemplary in their Lives, and Diligent in the Ministry are not to be despised; because they have their Use, and if placed in a proper Situation, may be highly serviceable to the Glory of God: But still it will become the Clergy to *covet earnestly the best Gifts*, and the Laity to *encourage* them. For as *there are Differences of Administrations* in the Church, it will require a *Diversity of Gifts* to serve them; and a Difference of Talents in the Teachers, according to the different Capacities of those that are to be taught. And therefore a Patron cannot be thought to have a due regard to the *Fitness* of his Clerk, who does not consider the Nature of the Charge he is to undertake; and in some sort the Temper and Disposition of the People, and the *manner of Life and Business*

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ness of those over whom he is to be placed: For doubtless those may be very *Fit* to take upon them the Care of a Country Church, that would not be proper to be placed among Men of a more ingenuous Education; to instruct an ignorant and illiterate people, that would be likely to be Despised by a more *polite* Audience. And many a Man may be *Fit* to Teach a single Congregation, who has not the Spirit of Government, and therefore would be utterly *Unfit* for the Office of a Bishop, or to undertake *the Care of all the Churches*. This is an Observation so obvious, that it need not be insisted on: And therefore since God has dispensed a different measure of his Spirit, and distributed his Gifts, according to the different Occasions of his Church; to some more, to some less: Such a Distribution of his Gifts may, I think, be very well consider'd as a Secret Designation or a Providential Recommendation (if I may so speak) of the Persons to whom they are committed, to such Benefices as they are respectively best qualified to serve; and therefore should not be overlook'd by the Patrons that bestow them: Neither should they consider the *Right* they enjoy any otherwise than as an Opportunity put into their hands, to promote the Glory of God and the general Benefit of his Church. This should be the End of all their Care, the chief and constant Aim of all their Endeavours; this the Use they should make of their Privilege: forasmuch as it is a Talent intrusted in their hands,

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hands, for which they must hereafter be certainly accountable unto God.

AND therefore among the Canons of 1517. we have this relating to the Duty of Patrons*: *Episcopus graviter & studiose cohortabitur Patronos Beneficiorum, ut cogitent Necessitates Ecclesie, & ante Oculos habeant ultimum illum diem, & Judicium, & Tribunal Dei. Itaque ut neminem promoveant ad munus Ecclesiasticum, nisi qui Doctrinâ, Judicio, Pietate, probitate vitæ & Innocentiâ possit Onus tam grave sustinere: Ut nihil in eâ re nisi integrè, incorruptè & sincerè faciant.* Whereby the Bishop is required earnestly to admonish and urge the Patrons of Benefices to consider the Necessities of the Church, and to have before their eyes the last great day of Judgment, when they shall be cited before the Tribunal of Christ: And therefore that they would not advance any one to any Ecclesiastical Preferment, but such as for their Learning, Judgment, Piety, Probity and Innocence of Life, are fit to undertake so weighty a charge; doing nothing herein but with Integrity, Sincerity and without Corruption. Where we see, the Argument by which the Bishops are to move Patrons to a faithfull Discharge of the Trust reposed in them, is the Account which they are to give thereof, when they come to appear before God's Judgment Seat. And certainly there cannot any more powerfull Motive be urged for this end: For if they must give an Account, it

* Vid. Sparrow's Collect. of Canons. 4th Edit. p. 239.

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concerns them to take care to be able to give a *good Account*; because if they cannot do that, the immediate Consequence of *Judgment* is *Punishment*; a Punishment not like that which is inflicted by Human Laws, *Finite* and *Temporal*; but adequate to the Greatness of the Majesty offended, *Infinite* and *Eternal*.

AND let not any one think that God will not be very exact and strict in the Enquiry which he shall make concerning this matter: For since he *hath purchased a Church to himself by the precious Blood of his dear Son*, he cannot but be solicitous to preserve that which he bought at so costly a price. And since the Welfare of the Church Universal, consists in the Prosperity of Particular Branches of it; and since Particular Churches cannot flourish, as long as the single Parts or Congregations of which it is composed are in a weak and decaying State; and since the Health and Welfare of each of these Parts, depends so very much on the Faithfulness, Integrity, Diligence and Sufficiency of those that are to watch over them, and to whom the Charge of them is committed; we may be sure that God expects, that the utmost care should be taken to make choice of persons well qualified to undertake this Charge: That his gracious Design in giving us his Son, and the mercifull purposes of his Eternal Counsel towards his Church may not be defeated, but as much as possible furthered and promoted. For which end having appointed divers Orders and Ranks
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of Men in his Church, and invested different persons with different degrees of Power and Authority; Whosoever, by the Abuse of his Power and Authority, shall wilfully do any thing to the Hurt and Damage, much more to the Subversion and Dissolution of that, for which he has expressed so tender a Care and concern; may well expect to be Examined with a *strictness*, and to be Punished with a *Severity* proportionable to the Demerit of endeavouring to destroy *the Souls for whom Christ died*, to stop the Progress of his Kingdom, and to frustrate the End for which he came into the World.

THE Trust committed to the Charge of a Clergyman, is the highest Trust that can be reposed in Man; the Care of Souls, of *precious Immortal Souls*: And can it be thought a matter of no Consequence, what sort of Men those are, to whom this Care is committed? At least whatever other Men think, can They be of this opinion who are *Patrons*, and so themselves intrusted with some degree of this Care? Who therefore are concern'd to put it into safe hands, and to provide such *Fit Persons* to undertake it, as may ease them of the Burden annex'd thereunto: For otherwise they must expect themselves to answer for the Souls, that are a part of the *Spiritual Trust* put into their hands. And therefore I cannot think of a better Conclusion of this point than the words of *St. Paul*; which, tho' by him primarily spoken to the Elders
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and Governors of the Church, yet may I apprehend be safely applyed in a secondary Sense, and with some small alteration, to the case of Patrons: *Take heed unto the Flock over the which the Bishops have made you Overseers or Stewards, to feed the Church of God, not in person but by providing them with faithfull Pastors; to feed the Church of God which he hath purchased with his own Blood.*

AND now one would think the foregoing considerations if duely weighed, should be enough to convince all Patrons of Benefices of the Obligation that lies upon them in point of Conscience, to provide *Fit Persons* both as to *Learning* and *Morality*, for so important a Charge. And for this end I cannot but think it incumbent upon them,

1. IN the first place, to bestow the Benefices that are in their Gift *Freely*; not only without bringing the Clerks they present under any *Contract* or *Promise* of *money*, *reward*, *gift* or *benefit* whatsoever to accrue to themselves, for and in consideration of such Presentation obtained; which is a degree of Corruption directly contrary to the Statute 31. *Eliz. Cap. 6.* and to the Oath which the Clerks take against *Simony*: But also without imposing upon them any other hard Terms, which the Common Law by virtue of some few bad Precedents may allow; or laying them under any other *ensnaring Obligations*, whereby a corrupt and degenerate Age has advanced very far, towards evacuating the

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Oath which must be taken by them, before they are admitted to any Benefice, that they have not obtained it by any *Simoniackal Payment, Contract or Promise* whatsoever. And *such* I take to be all manner of Promises or Engagements, to do *any thing more, or in any other way* than it is their Duty to do, by the *Rules and Canons* of the Church; by which a Patron is influenc'd to give a Presentation to one, whom perhaps he would not otherwise oblige.

Now it ought to be consider'd, that the Oath which the Clerk takes before Institution is not merely against direct *Simony*, but against any *Simoniackal Contract*; and it is the great Canonist *Lyndwood's* Opinion upon the Provincial Constitutions, * which are a part of the Laws Ecclesiastical by which the Nature of *Simony* is to be interpreted, that whatever is done with an Intention to induce the Patron to present is *Simoniackal*; and then it should seem, that any Promise or Agreement that is made for that purpose is inconsistent with the Oath, and with the Truth and Sincerity of Him that takes it. Now tho' the Patron do not take this Oath, and so may think *Himself* Guiltless if his Clerk do swear falsely; yet, besides the being Accessory to so great a crime as *Perjury* in another, the Sin of *Simony* will be sure to stick close to him: Which is so detestable in the fight

* Cap. de Jurejur, Præsenti statuto.

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sight of God, that our Laws both Ecclesiastical and Civil, do very justly punish the *Simoniacal* Patron with the Forfeiture of his Right of Presentation for that Turn *. And tho' the Legal Forfeiture cannot take place, but upon a Discovery of Corruption; yet the Guilt, where any Corruption is used, remains before God to whom Secrets are known, and who will be sure in due time both to discover and to punish all such *hidden things of Dishonesty*: And then the Patron must answer both for his Simony, and for his Unfaithfulness; For he cannot possibly in conscience think any one *Fit* to be presented to his Benefice, who is so *corrupt* as to enter into any *Simoniacal Contract* to obtain it, and so *profane* as to despise the Oath by which he disclaims any such Contract.

I cannot think so hardly of *my Brethren* as not to conclude, that Instances of men ready to enter into any Promise or Contract upon this Account, knowing or thinking it to be *Simoniacal*, are very rarely if ever to be met with. But there being *several ways*, by which this Guilt may be contracted; and *several ends*, some seemingly Pious, others charitable and reasonable to be promoted by it; as it will become the Clergy to be well satisfied, both in point of Law and Conscience, that any Promise that shall be required of them is Justifiable:

* Vid. 31. Eliz. Cap. 6. and Injunct. of K. Ed. VI. and Q. Eliz. in Sparrow's Coll. p. 12, 75.

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able: So will it become Patrons to be conscientiously carefull how they lay a *Stumbling-block in their Brother's way*, to hazard *His Soul*; or endanger *their own*, by being False to their Trust.

IT is not within the compass of my Design to give Instructions to the *Clergy*, from whom I am always ready to receive Advice; being not so fit to *Teach* them, as to be *taught* by them: My Business is with *Lay-Patrons*. And as to *Them*, there cannot be need of many Words to shew the Illegality, or the mischievous Effects of their bringing the Clerks they present to any Benefice, under any *Simonical Engagements* in such notorious Branches, as are agreed on all hands to be condemned by the Common Law. And therefore the only thing necessary to be done is to consider, what their Duty is in such disputable or perhaps plausible Cases, where the Law *seems* to allow them Liberty to take Promises or other Engagements of their Presentees, particularly *Bonds of Resignation*, in order to promote a Pious, or a Charitable and Reasonable End.

AND 1.) For the seemingly Pious ends which a Patron may propose, by taking a Promise, &c. of his Clerk: It may be a Patron has a conscientious regard to the Trust the Church has reposed in him, and from a sincere care of the Souls over whom his Clerk is to be placed, obliges him either by Promise, or by Bond, or the like, to constant

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stant Residence, or to Preach twice a Day, &c.

Now in such cases as these it ought to be consider'd, how far the Rules of the Church, or his own Conscience (which is a better and stronger Tie) will oblige a Clerk to do these things: For since he cannot, consistently with his Oath, bring himself under any Obligation, to Do any thing which he is not bound in Law and Conscience to do, without such Obligation laid on him by the Patron; I cannot see how the Patron can with a good Conscience require him, to enter into any such Obligation for the Doing it. And therefore the best method for a Patron to effect the *best ends* that he can project for the Good of his Church, is to find out *Fit Persons*, to whom he may commit the Care of it; Men of Integrity and Piety, such as by the Tenor of their Conversation appear to have a due Sense, of the *vast Importance* and *great Weight* of the Charge of Souls, and of their Obligation to pursue all proper methods, by unwearied Labour and Diligence in their Vocation, to set forward their Eternal Salvation; in short, Men that shew themselves by the *undisguised Simplicity* of their Behaviour, to be guided entirely by *Conscience*: This is a better Security for the Discharge of their Duty, than any Promise or Bond they can give. And whatever an Ungratefull Age may suggest to the contrary; I cannot think that

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that such Men, Clerks that are truly Conscientious are so scarce; but that Patrons who are faithfull in their Enquiries, and sincerely carefull to discharge their Trust, might find them; and so provide, that the Places under their care shall be well and duly supplied; without having recourse to Promises, or Bonds, or other Covenants, which at the best carry but a very suspicious Appearance, and are hardly reconcilable with the Protestation that every Clerk must make upon Oath, of his having enter'd into no manner of Engagements in order to obtain the Benefice he comes for Institution to.

BESIDES, how can a Patron present to the Bishop any Clerk as a *Fit Person* to be admitted to a Benefice, *i. e.* One whom he believes to be *able* and *willing* to discharge his Duty in the faithfull Care of the Souls, he nominates him to serve and watch over; of whom he shews a manifest Distrust, by requiring of him a Bond or other Obligation, for Security that he *will so* discharge it? Or how can the Patron answer it to the Bishop, for assuming to Himself, the Authority which of Right belongs to Him? The Patron's Right is no more than that of Nomination of *Fit Persons* to serve the Church; and the Power over them after Institution belongs to None but the Bishop: It is his Care to see that they do their Duty, and the proper and legal way to oblige them to it is by Application to him; who will be sure to see that they do it as far as his

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his Authority reaches. And supposing it not to extend so far as fully to answer this End particularly in the Case of Residence, I can't see what the Patron can justly do to supply this Defect, more than using his utmost previous care and diligence to find such Men of Conscience, as I before described; from the Tenor of whose Conversation and Goodness of their Character, he may reasonably presume that they *will Reside*, &c. without laying them under any Promises or Bonds to *make* them.

'Tis true, a Patron may be deceived in his Expectations of those whom he takes to be the best Men; but then it cannot but be a great Satisfaction to him, that he discharged *his* Conscience, by the good and reasonable Presumption that he had of their Readiness to discharge *Theirs*: And whenever the Trust returns into his hands by the Death or Cession of his Clerk, his obligation returns to provide his Church with a *Fit Person* to serve it; upon the best grounds of Belief and Assurance that he can get, of his Readiness and conscientious Care to Discharge his Duty, without obliging him to do it by any unjustifiable Promise or Bond. But if it be not allowable for a Patron, to bind his Clerk to any thing, that is not matter of strict Duty, by virtue of other Obligations; or to require Promises or other Engagements from him, in order to promote a good and pious End; much less can a Patron be Justified.

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2.) For obliging a Clerk to concur with him, in that which is thought a charitable or a reasonable End by making such a Concurrence, by Bond or Promise or the like, the condition of obtaining a Presentation to a vacant Benefice: As in the case, of holding a Benefice in *Trust* for a *Minor*, till he arrives at the Canonical Age of Institution; or of Relieving the *Relict* and Children of the last Incumbent, who perhaps expended great Sums in Repairing or Building, and by that means left his Family in a starving condition.

For as to the First of these cases, if a Patron design a Kindness to a Minor that is in need, and is to gain his Livelihood by his future Advancement to the Care of Souls in the Church; it must be consider'd, that the *Canonical Age* of Institution is not the *only* Requisite to qualify such a one to undertake this Care; he must also be *FIT* for it, both as to *Learning* and *Morality*: And tho' I don't question, but when the Case is fairly stated to the Bishop, it may be lawful to receive the Benefice in *Trust* for the *Minor*; yet that the Person who takes this Trust can lawfully enter into a Bond to resign it at the time, or having so done can take the Oath against Simony, does not appear: For, as Bishop *Stillington* excellently observes*, the Taking of a Bond argues a *Mistrust*, and is therefore contrary to the Nature of a *Trust*.

AND

* Eccl. Cases. p. 348.

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AND therefore it seems to me, that the *Trustee* in this Case ought to be left to his own *Honour and Conscience*, and these are Ties strong enough to influence a Good man, to Resign the Benefice upon the Minor's coming to Age: But still with this condition, that he be *Fit* to receive it. For otherwise I can't see how the Person put in Trust, can answer it to God or to the Church, for making way for an *Unfit* Person by Resignation; or the Patron, for Presenting such a one, how great soever his Kindness may be for him. Insomuch that if it were his own Son, for whom this Benefice might be kept in Trust, even Paternal Affection ought not to prevail above the Good of the Church, or the Consideration of His *Fitness* for the Charge he is to undertake. And then there would be this further and material Consideration against the Patron's requiring a Promise or Bond of Resignation, from the Person with whom he entrusts the Benefice; that it would so plainly redound to the *Benefit* of the Patron, as to make it *Simoniackal* in the most obvious Sense of the word, and as well by Common as Ecclesiastical Law.

As to the other Case of Relieving the Relict and Children of the last Incumbent, who is supposed to have worsted his Family by Building, &c. and died before he could repay himself out of his Living: If a Clerk receive the Benefit of his Predecessor's Expences, it seems but reasonable that he should

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consider, and according to his Ability relieve, the Necessities of his Distressed Family that may be left behind. But I cannot see how he can safely promise that he will do this, in order to induce the Patron to present him; or how the Patron can justly or with a good Conscience require him to make any such Promise, or to enter into any other Engagement for that end; since it is so plainly inconsistent with the Oath which he must take: And therefore in this Case, as in the other, he ought to be left to his own *Honour* and *Conscience*; which from a Good man are the best Assurances of Doing that *Freely*, which cannot be *extorted* by any other Bonds without the Guilt of Simony and Perjury.

As for the common Grievance of *Resignation-Bonds* secretly contrived, under Conditions less honest than those already mentioned, and therefore couched in General Terms; whatever the Temporal Courts may have determined concerning their Legality, *where no direct Profit or Reward is expressed*; They are so visibly calculated for Unjustifiable ends, so plainly capable of being used for indirect and illegal purposes, and are so manifest a Snare upon the Conscience of the Clerk, because of the Oath which he is afterwards to take; that it is hard to find out any tolerable Excuse for the Patron that imposes them, or for the Clerk that submits to them.

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INDEED the Latter possibly may urge *Great Necessities*, as a Plea for putting himself thus under the Power of the Former. But what can He that is under no such Temptation say for abusing his Trust, and taking the Advantage of his Fortune and Privilege, to extort unreasonable Terms from One whom he would be thought to oblige? Surely if men had any Sense of *Honour*, tho' they have no *Conscience*, they would not thus for sordid Ends (such as Ease in their Tithes, keeping their Clerks in Subjection to their Humours, &c.) lessen the Obligation laid on their Presentees. But when it is considered how directly these Methods tend to the Ruin of the Church, as they are a visible Inlet to the worst Simony that the most corrupt Patron can commit, one might hope that the Legislative Authority would try (if there can be any more effectual method contrived than what is already provided) to put a stop to them, since *Honour and Conscience* are found too weak a Guard against 'em: For in these Cases it is forgot, that the Patron usurps upon the Bishop's Right, by claiming a Power over the Incumbent after Institution; and that the Clerk obliges himself to do that which he has no Power to do, *viz.* to make an Avoidance of his Benefice by Resignation at the Demand of the Patron, which must in Law be made into the hands only of the Bishop, and cannot take effect but by his Acceptance of it. As is very justly observed by the Bishop

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of *Lincoln*, in his *Codex Juris Eccles. Tit. 34. Cap. 4.* and by Bishop *Stillingsfleet*, in his most excellent Discourse concerning *Bonds of Resignation*; to whom I refer the Reader for a fuller and better Answer to all that can be urged in favour of such Bonds, upon any pretence whatsoever of Reason or Law.

AND now I hope enough has been said to shew, how much it is the Duty of Patrons, to bestow the Benefices that are in their Gift *Freely*: But before I conclude, they must give me leave to put them in mind further,

2. IN the second place, Of their Obligation to bestow them with a due regard to the Merits and Worth of the Clergy; setting aside all Considerations of Relation, Friendship, Party, &c. when the Persons they would otherwise oblige are not *Fit* to be put into such places. Not but that from the beginning these Preferments were, and honestly might, and still may be bestowed upon consideration of Friendship or Relation, where the Persons are otherwise qualified for their Office: And therefore I only urge the Obligation of Patrons, not to bestow their Preferments for Friendship sake, &c. without any regard to the Worth or *Fitness* of the Clerks they present; nor to bring those into the Church for Maintenance, whom they know to be Unfit to perform the Duties of their places, by reason of their Ignorance or Immorality.

FOR

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FOR certainly the Benefit of the Church ought to weigh down all Private Considerations, and as a Patron cannot give a better proof of *his own Worth* than by a due regard to the *Worth of other men*; so will he shew himself *Deserving* of the Privilege which he enjoys, by refusing the Benefices which are in his Disposal even to his own Family, if they do not take care by their Learning and Piety to *Deserve* them. And it cannot but be reckon'd a very meritorious Act of Self-denial, thus to consult the Publick Good at his Private Disadvantage; and to give up the Opportunity of Providing for a Relation or Obliging a Friend, to the common Interest and Benefit of the Church.

NEITHER indeed will the Family or Friends of a Patron, who governs himself by these Principles, and is faithfull to the Trust the Church has placed in him, be in the end any Losers at all thereby: For they will only find themselves obliged to qualifie themselves, by a good Life and Diligence in their Studies for His Favour, who will be ready on the score of Relation or Friendship to Prefer them. And as these Qualifications will thus turn to their Temporal Advantage, by giving them the Title of *Desert* in the Eye of a consciencious and good Patron; so will it undoubtedly turn to their spiritual Advantage, as they will thereby become the more capable of serving the Spiritual Wants of those over whom they shall be placed, and so gaining a Title to the future

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future Reward of it. Which must be such a satisfaction to Him, who by the conscientious regard to his *Spiritual Trust* of Patronage, became the Instrument and Occasion of procuring so great Benefits to his Family, or those that otherwise depend upon him; as cannot but convince him of the Blessing of God accompanying and Rewarding his Piety, with reasonable grounds of hope that this Blessing shall descend upon his Posterity.

BUT on the other hand how great must be the Mischief to the Church, if Patrons should pay no regard to the Merits, the Learning or Piety of the Clergy; but suffer undeserving Relations or Friends to engross their Preferments? What a Discouragement must it be to Merit, to see itself neglected? To such as are ingenious, diligent and Faithfull in their Ministry, to see Dissolute, Lazy or Illiterate Clerks preferr'd before them? And after many Years of painfull and conscientious Labour and Industry in a mean Station or poor Curacy, to find themselves still but in the condition of Stipendiaries? What a cramp must the straitness of their Circumstances, be to the Freedom of their Thoughts? What a Check must it be to their Progress and Improvement in Science, to find it so barren and unprofitable? Or, how can it be thought they should be able, considering the Weakness of Human Nature, always to resist the Sollicitations of Want, or to bear the Insolence of Contempt? But that
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after tedious and fruitless Expectations of rising by Merit, they should at length descend to those mean Arts of Advancement, which they may possibly have seen used by Others, perhaps less Deserving, with Success? For if Soothing Great Men in their Vices, mean and base Compliances with their corrupt Humours, if servile Attendance and Submission (falsely termed Humility) be the readiest way to obtain their favour: If Hypocrisie and Flattery, if Cringing, Sneaking and Fawning be a nearer and surer step to Preferment, than painfull Study, faithfull Diligence, open Sincerity, resolute Stedfastness and Perseverance in well-doing; can it be wonder'd that Human Nature should carry Men to go the surest, the easiest and the quickest way to work?

BUT in case a Clergyman under all Discouragements should still *hold fast his Integrity*, and from the Sense of the Honour and Dignity of his Function, should keep himself free from sordid Obsequiousness and any base or unworthy Compliances: Yet it must be acknowledged very hard and unreasonable, that his Virtues should be a Bar to his Preferment; and that he should be neglected and kept *low*, for that very reason for which he ought to be *advanced*.

BUT it is well that this is not the Case of all the Clergy; but that the Great and Real Merits of some have advanced them to the highest Stations in the Church: Which as it

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is a proof that there are Some *Patrons* among the Laity, who have a due Value for Learning and Piety; so is it an Encouragement to those that endeavour at an humble Distance to tread in the steps of their Exalted Merit, to hope that Their Light also will at last break through the Cloud; And, how much reason soever there may be to complain of the Abuse of Private Patronage, yet that this Abuse is not Universal; but that there are still to be found Men of a Publick Spirit, to Patronize their inferior Merit and raise their Heads out of Obscurity. This at least they may rest assured of, that provided they continue to go on in the paths of *Honour* and *Virtue*; since there are so many *shining Lights*, Men of great Abilities and Deserts raised to be *Angels* and Guardians over the Church, they shall find a *Shadow and Defense* under their *Wings*: And that however some *Lay-men* may dispose of their Benefices upon private or sinister Considerations, without regarding the Worth of the Persons whom they Prefer; yet the most effectual way to obtain Preferment from all *Church-men* is to **DESERVE** it.

F I N I S.